

A History of Indian Buddhism: From Sakyamuni to Early Mahayana.

By Hirakawa Akira, Translated by Paul Groner

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## CHAPTER 6

# *The Development of the Buddhist Order*

### **The Order after the Buddha's Death**

AT THE TIME of the Buddha's death, the Buddhist order had spread only within central India. The Buddha's birthplace, Lumbinī, and the place where he died, Kuśinagara, were both on the northern fringes of central India. Buddhagayā, where he attained enlightenment, was in the southern part of central India. The Deer Park at Sārnāth, where he preached his first sermon, was in the western part of central India. These four sacred sites of reliquaries or memorials (*caitya*) soon flourished as pilgrimage centers (*DN*, vol. 2, p. 140). For early Buddhists, the term "central country" (*madhya-deśa*), found in many Buddhist texts, referred to central India.<sup>1</sup>

After the Buddha's death, missionaries spread Buddhism to the west and southwest. (The Vindhya Mountains blocked the spread of Buddhism to the south, and the east was tropical and undeveloped.) They were particularly successful in the southwest. Buddhism advanced more slowly in the west because this area was a stronghold of Brahmanism.

During the Buddha's lifetime, missionary activity is reported in the western part of India. One of the Buddha's ten chief disciples, Mahākātyāyana (P. Mahākaccāyana) was a native of Avanti (where Ujjayinī was the capital). Mahākātyāyana is said to have been especially adept at giving detailed explanations of the terse summaries of teachings that the Buddha's disciples had memorized. According to the *Āgamas*, Mahākātyāyana later returned to Avanti to preach. While he was in Avanti, Mahākātyāyana ordained Śroṇakoṭikarṇa (P. Soṇakoṭikarṇa), a native

of Aparāntaka (P. Aparānta), which was on the west coast of India. When Śroṇakoṭikarṇa was about to go to visit the Buddha in Śrāvastī (P. Sāvasthī), Mahākātyāyana requested that he ask the Buddha for permission to make five exceptions to the observance of the precepts. One of these permitted monks living in remote areas, where it was difficult to assemble the required number of monks, to ordain new monks with an order of five monks instead of the usual ten.

According to *vinayas* of the Sthavira lineage, Śroṇakoṭikarṇa was a disciple of Mahākātyāyana. However, *vinayas* of the Mahāsaṅghika lineage state that Śroṇakoṭikarṇa was a disciple of Pūrṇa (P. Puṇṇa), a native of Śūrpāraka in Sunāparantaka. Śūrpāraka, also known as Sopāra, was a seaport on the west coast of India to the north of the modern city of Bombay. One of Aśoka's edicts was discovered in this area. After Pūrṇa realized enlightenment, he returned to preach in his own country, where he made many disciples. The *sūtra* in which he tells the Buddha about his determination to spread Buddhism is widely known (*MN*, no. 145). Through his efforts, Buddhism was established in this area in western India. Stories about the many merchants who became Buddhists are found in the *Āgamas*. Many of these converts had come to central India for business purposes, professed their faith in Buddhism, and then returned to their homes to preach their new religion. Such figures as Pūrṇa and Mahākātyāyana are examples of this type of believer. A number of *sūtras* describe how Mahākātyāyana preached in Mathurā (near Delhi) and Avanti.

The verses in the prologue to the *Pārāyana-vagga* (Chapter on the Road to the Beyond) of the *Suttanipāta* (Group of Discourses) relate the story of a Brahman named Bāvarī, who lived near the upper reaches of the Godāvārī River in the Deccan. When he heard about the Buddha, he sent sixteen disciples to listen to the Buddha's teaching. The disciples went from Pratiṣṭhāna (P. Patiṭṭhāna) on the Godāvārī River, along the Southern Route (Dakṣiṇāpatha), passing through Ujjayinī, Vidiśā, Kauśāmbī, and Sāketa on their way to Śrāvastī. The sixteen disciples of the Brahman questioned the Buddha, whose reply is said to be preserved as the *Pārāyana-vagga* of the *Suttanipāta*. Both this chapter and the *Aṭṭhaka-vagga* (Chapter of the Eights) of the *Suttanipāta* are written in a very old style of Pāli and are thus thought to belong to the oldest strata of the *Āgamas*. However, when these chapters are compared with the language used in Aśoka's edicts, it is impossible to determine which is earlier. Thus, although the *Pārāyana-vagga* is written in an early style of Pāli, it cannot be proven that it was composed during the Buddha's lifetime. Moreover, the verses that comprise the prologue of the *Pārāyana-vagga* were composed later than the verses that the Buddha is said to

have spoken in the *Pārāyana-vagga* itself. Consequently, the prologue does not provide evidence that the Buddha's fame extended to the Deccan during his lifetime.

Passages such as these prove that Buddhism spread along the Southern Route after the Buddha's death. The birthplace of King Aśoka's son Mahinda, who is credited with being the transmitter of Buddhism to Sri Lanka, is said to have been Ujjayinī. The texts of Sri Lankan Buddhism are written in Pāli, a language closely resembling that in one of Aśoka's edicts found at Gīrnār on the Kāthiāwar Peninsula near Aparāntaka. Buddhism was obviously firmly established in this region by the time of King Aśoka.<sup>2</sup>

### The Political Situation

According to Sri Lankan sources, the Buddha died in the eighth year of the reign of King Ajātaśatru (P. Ajātasattu), ruler of Magadha, who had succeeded to the throne after killing his father, King Bimbisāra. Ajātaśatru conquered much of central India and increased the power of Magadha. His dynasty continued for several generations until the people overthrew it during the reign of King Nāgadāsaka. One of Nāgadāsaka's ministers, Susunāga, was crowned as the new king and founded the Susunāga dynasty. During this period, Magadha conquered Avanti. However, after a short time, the Susunāga dynasty was replaced by the Nanda dynasty, which then amassed great military power and conquered a large territory, extending its borders beyond India. However, it declined after only twenty-two years. In 327 B.C.E. Alexander the Great led a large army into northwestern India and conquered it. Instead of pressing on, however, he led his army out of India and died in Babylon in 323 B.C.E. Thus central India was spared conquest by the Macedonians. In the aftermath of the disorder brought about by the Macedonian invasions, young Candragupta, with the aid of his prime minister Kauṭilya, assembled troops, toppled the Nanda dynasty, and founded the Mauryan dynasty. He destroyed Macedonian power in northwestern India, conquered much of the rest of India, and thus established a strong kingdom, which he ruled for twenty-four years. Candragupta was succeeded by his son Bindusāra, who ruled for twenty-eight years. Bindusāra's son, Aśoka, ascended the throne in 268 B.C.E.

According to the Sri Lankan chronicles, 218 years passed between the time of the Buddha's death and the year Aśoka became king. In contrast, sources in the Northern tradition state that the time between these

two events was only one hundred years. If the above account of the political situation in India is correct, one hundred years would seem to be too short for the time span between the Buddha's death and Aśoka's succession. In the *A-yü-wang chuan* (T 50:99c, *Aśokarājāvadāna\**), a work belonging to the Northern tradition of Buddhism, the names of twelve kings of Magadha are listed, beginning with Bimbisāra and concluding with Susīma, a contemporary of Aśoka. The durations of their reigns, however, are not listed, making it difficult to determine whether the figure of 100 years or 218 years is more trustworthy. The many points in which the various accounts disagree prevent any of them from being considered an infallible source. Although the dates in the Sri Lankan chronicles would seem to be more trustworthy than those in other accounts, even the Sri Lankan histories present many difficult problems when they are used to reconstruct a history of the early Buddhist order. Consequently, the problem of determining what period elapsed between the Buddha and Aśoka must remain unsolved for the present. The following account of the development of the Buddhist order relies upon both the Sri Lankan chronicles and the Northern sources.<sup>3</sup>

### The Second Council and the First Major Schism in the Order

After the Buddha's death, missionaries spread Buddhism from central India to the southwest along the Southern Route. Buddhism was also transmitted to western India, where it flourished in Mathurā (Madhurā), a city on the banks of the Jamuna to the southeast of modern Delhi. Mathurā is a considerable distance from central India. Because it is the location where Krishna worship arose, it is a sacred place to Hindus. At one time, however, Buddhism flourished there, and it was a stronghold of the Sarvāstivādin School. According to scriptures, Mahākātyāyana preached in Mathurā. No *sūtras* record the Buddha as preaching there. In fact, he stated that Mathurā had five major problems that made it unpleasant to live in (such as being dusty and having many mad dogs), and he therefore avoided it. Since Mathurā was far from central India, it would take some time before Buddhism reached it.

One hundred years after the Buddha's death, at the time of the Second Council, Buddhism was still not strong in Mathurā. The Second Council was held because the monks of Vaiśālī were said to have adopted ten practices that violated the precepts. When a dispute arose over these practices, seven hundred monks assembled in Vaiśālī and determined that the monks of Vaiśālī were in error. Although deciding the status of the ten practices in question was the main reason for the

meeting, the *Dīpavamsa*, a Sri Lankan chronicle, refers to the meeting as the “Second Council” because the canon was chanted after the other business had been completed.<sup>4</sup> However, the “Chapter on the Council of the Seven Hundred” in the *Vinaya* states only that the meeting concerned the ten practices and does not consider it to be the Second Council.

According to Pāli sources the ten disputed practices and the rules they violated were as follows:

1. Carrying salt in an animal horn—violated a rule against the storing of food
2. Taking food when the shadow on the sundial is two fingers past noon—violated a rule against eating after noon
3. After eating, traveling to another village to eat another meal the same day—violating the rule against overeating
4. Holding several fortnightly assemblies within the same boundaries (*sīmā*)—violated procedures requiring all monks within the *sīmā* to attend the same fortnightly assembly
5. Confirming an ecclesiastical act in an incomplete assembly and obtaining approval from absent monks afterward—violated the rules of procedure at monastic meetings
6. Citing habitual practice as the authority for violations of monastic procedures—violated the rules of procedure
7. Drinking milk whey after meals—violated the rule against eating special food when one was not sick
8. Drinking unfermented wine—violated the rule against drinking intoxicating beverages
9. Using a mat with fringes—violated the rule concerning the measurements of rugs
10. Accepting gold and silver—violated the rule prohibiting monks from receiving gold and silver

All of these practices were banned in the full sets of precepts for monks.<sup>5</sup> Because observing the full precepts would have required special efforts by the monks, the advocates of the ten practices were attempting to liberalize monastic practice. The argument concerning the tenth practice, whether monks could touch gold and silver, was especially bitter. In the following discussion, the story of the Second Council is summarized in accordance with the “Chapter on the Council of Seven Hundred” from the Pāli *Vinaya*.

Approximately one century after the Buddha’s death, a monk named Yaśas (P. Yasa-kākāṇḍakaputta) was traveling in Vaiśālī when he

noticed that the monks of that area were receiving alms of gold and silver directly from lay believers. When he pointed out to them that their activity was in violation of the rules in the *vinaya*, the monks of Vaiśālī expelled him from the order. Yaśas then traveled west to seek assistance.

Yaśas appealed to monks from Avanti, Pāvā (Pāṭheyyakā), and areas along the Southern Route. Avanti and other areas along the Southern Route had already been opened up to Buddhism by Mahākātyāyana and Pūrṇa and thus must have been the sites of well-established orders by this time. The monks of Pāvā were probably from the western part of Kauśāla. This area was to the far west of Śrāvastī, and included Sāṅkāśya and Kanyākubja. A little further to the west was Mathurā. Pāvā was the site of a very strong Buddhist order at this time. Thus, a century after the Buddha's death, Buddhism had spread beyond central India and was becoming an important force in western India.

Among the influential monks in the west was an elder named Saṃbhūta Sāṇavāsī, who lived on Mount Ahogaṅga. Another important elder was Revata, who was from Soreyya, a town on the upper reaches of the Ganges River near Sāṅkāśya, the center of the area around Pāvā. Because Yaśas sought help in the west, the argument over the ten points of *vinaya* is often thought of as a dispute between the monks of the east and the west. However, because some monks in the east (Magadha and Vaiśālī) joined with those in the west in opposing the adoption of the ten points, the dispute should be viewed as one between a conservative group, which advocated a strict interpretation of the precepts, and a more liberal group, which wished to permit certain exceptions to the observance of the precepts.

The dissemination of Buddhism during the century after the Buddha's death led to an increase in the numbers of monks and its diffusion over a broader geographical area. Ample opportunities existed for differences of interpretation to lead to controversies involving the order. The conservative position prevailed at the council, probably because most of the elders favored a conservative approach. Eventually, a decision was reached to appoint four monks from the west and four from the east to consider the ten points and judge their orthodoxy. The elders chosen as representatives ruled that all ten points should be rejected. Many monks, however, refused to accept their ruling, and their dissatisfaction contributed to a schism in the order.

The schism, often called the basic schism (Ch. *ken-pen fen-lieh*), resulted in the formation of two schools: the Mahāsaṅghika, whose monks refused to accept the conservative ruling of the committee of eight monks, and the Sthaviravāda (P. Theravāda), whose monks agreed with the conservative ruling. The name Mahāsaṅghika means

“great assembly” and suggests that many monks belonged to the liberal faction.

According to the *I-pu-tsung-lun-lun* (*T* 2031, *Samayabhedoparacanacakra*\*; hereafter cited as *Samaya*), a work by Vasumitra from the Northern tradition concerning the formation of the schools of Hīnayāna Buddhism and their doctrines, the cause of the basic schism was five teachings promulgated by Mahādeva. However, many modern scholars believe that Mahādeva’s five points were in fact the cause of a later schism and that they mistakenly were considered by Vasumitra to have been the cause of the basic schism.

According to the *vinayas* of various schools and other sources, the controversy over the ten points of practice occurred a century after the Buddha’s death. Moreover, the Sri Lankan chronicles and the *Samaya* of the Northern tradition both date the basic schism to the same time. Still other stories concerning schisms in the order are recorded in Tibetan sources; however, both Northern and Southern (Pāli) sources are in agreement that a schism that resulted in the formation of the Mahāsaṅghika and Sthavira schools occurred one century after the Buddha’s death. Since the *vinayas* of the Theravāda, Sarvāstivādin, Mahīśāsaka, and Dharmaguptaka schools all record that the controversy over the ten points of *vinaya* occurred one century after the Buddha’s death, this dispute must be considered to be the cause of the basic schism.

The five points of doctrine advanced by Mahādeva may have added to the controversy surrounding the first schism. Mahādeva taught that (1) *arhats* may be sexually tempted, (2) *arhats* have a residue of ignorance, (3) *arhats* may have doubts, (4) *arhats* may attain enlightenment through the help of others, and (5) the path is attained with an exclamatory remark. The five points indicate that Mahādeva had a low opinion of the enlightenment of *arhats*. Mahādeva’s five points of doctrine are included in the Sarvāstivādin School’s *Samaya* (*T* 49:15a, 18a, 20a) and *Mahāvibhāṣā* (*T* 27:511a–c), as well as the Theravāda work, the *Kathāvatthu* (bk. 2, parts 1–5). Mahādeva’s five points of doctrine thus are representative of the issues debated by the schools of Hīnayāna Buddhism.

In discussing the basic schism, the extent of Buddhism’s spread in India and the difficulties in communication between areas of India must be taken into account. The schism probably did not occur over a period of days or months. Consequently, scholars cannot determine exactly when it occurred or at what point it was completed. However, the schism clearly did occur a little more than a century after the Buddha’s death. As the dissension gradually spread and involved many of the orders in various parts of India, arguments over a number of different points arose. According to the *Samaya*, Mahāsaṅghika doctrine included

certain views on the bodies of the Buddha and the concept of the bodhi-sattva that might have drawn opposition from more conservative monks. However, these doctrines were probably developed by later Mahāsaṅghika monks and do not represent Mahāsaṅghika doctrine at the time of the basic schism.

### Sāṇavāsī and Monastic Lineages

The chapters on the Second Council contained in the various *vinayas* are in agreement about the identities of the senior monks of the Buddhist order approximately a century after the Buddha's death. In the east Sarvakāmin was an important elder, and in the west Revata and Saṃbhūta Sāṇavāsī were influential. The roles of these three men are stressed in the Sri Lankan sources and are related to the accounts of a monk named Śāṇakavāsī in Northern sources.

In such Northern sources as the *Divyāvadāna*, *A-yü-wang chuan* (T 2042, *Aśokarājāvadāna\**), *A-yü-wang ching* (T 2043, *Aśokarājasūtra?*), and *Ken-pen yu-pu lü tsa-shih* (T 1451, *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinayakṣudrakavastu#*), the following patriarchal lineage is given: Mahākāśyapa, Ānanda, Śāṇakavāsī, and Upagupta. The monk Madhyāntika must also be mentioned. Madhyāntika was a fellow student with Śāṇakavāsī under Ānanda; however, since Madhyāntika became a disciple of Ānanda just before Ānanda died, Madhyāntika should probably be considered a contemporary of Upagupta. Śāṇakavāsī, Madhyāntika, Upagupta, and others mentioned in these lineages are also discussed in Sri Lankan sources. In the following paragraphs, the roles of these men and the relation between the Northern and Sri Lankan accounts of them are analyzed.

Saṃbhūta Sāṇavāsī is mentioned in the chapter on the Second Council in the Pāli *Vinaya*. He was a disciple of Ānanda, as was Śāṇakavāsī, who is mentioned in Northern sources. Both lived about one century after the Buddha's death. According to the Pāli *Vinaya*, Sāṇavāsī lived on Mount Ahogaṅga. Śāṇakavāsī is said to have resided on Mount Urumuṇḍa in Mathurā (*Divyāvadāna*, p. 349). Although the names of the two mountains were different, both mountains are said to have been reached by boat. (The name of Mount Ahogaṅga indicates that it was probably on the Ganges River.)

The name "Sāṇavāsī" does not appear in the following list of patriarchs found in Sri Lankan sources: Upālī, Dāsaka, Sonaka, Siggava, and Moggaliputta Tissa. Aśoka's teacher Moggaliputta Tissa is said to have resided on Mount Ahogaṅga (*Samantapāsādikā*, p. 53). King Aśoka



sent a boat to the mountain to bring Moggaliputta back to the capital. In contrast, Northern sources state both that Śāṇakavāsī's disciple Upagupta was Aśoka's teacher and that Upagupta succeeded his teacher on Mount Urumuṇḍa. Moreover, according to Northern sources, Aśoka sent for Upagupta with a boat and the boat then returned to Pāṭaliputra. In conclusion, although the names of the two mountains are different, the accounts resemble each other in many ways. Śāṇakavāsī of Northern sources is not called "Saṃbhūta" as is Sāṇavāsī of the Sri Lankan tradition. Although Śāṇakavāsī and Saṃbhūta Sāṇavāsī cannot be proven to be identical, since they were both Ānanda's disciples and lived at the same time and in similar places, they probably were, in fact, the same person.

In Sri Lankan sources such as the *Dīpavaṃsa*, *Mahāvaṃsa*, and the *Samantapāsādikā*, the following lineage of *vinaya* masters is recorded: Upāli, Dāsaka, Sonaka, Siggava, and Moggaliputta Tissa. Since, according to Sri Lankan sources, Moggaliputta Tissa is said to have been Aśoka's teacher, five generations of teachers would have served between the death of the Buddha and the accession of Aśoka to the throne. In Northern sources, Aśoka's teacher is said to have been Upagupta; thus, according to Northern sources, four generations of teachers would have passed between the death of the Buddha and Aśoka. Saṃbhūta Sāṇavāsī does not appear in the lineage in the Northern sources because, as a disciple of Ānanda, Sāṇavāsī belonged to a different lineage. In contrast, the Sri Lankan lineage of *vinaya* masters was based on the fact that Moggaliputta's preceptor was Siggava and Siggava's preceptor was Sonaka and so forth back to Upāli. Consequently, there was no place in the Sri Lankan lineage to add Ānanda.

According to the lineages found in Northern sources, Upagupta's preceptor was Śāṇakavāsī, Śāṇakavāsī's preceptor was Ānanda, and Ānanda's preceptor was Mahākāśyapa. However, doubt exists about whether Ānanda's preceptor was Mahākāśyapa. According to the Pāli *Vinaya*, Ānanda's preceptor was named Belaṭṭhasīsa, indicating that Ānanda's preceptor probably was not Mahākāśyapa (*Vinaya*, vol. 4, p. 86). Why Mahākāśyapa was listed as Ānanda's preceptor must be considered further.

After the Buddha's death Mahākāśyapa was probably the Buddha's most powerful disciple. Mahākāśyapa presided over the First Council. Moreover, a number of stories in the *Āgamas* demonstrate the respect held for Mahākāśyapa. For example, in one story the Buddha shared his seat with Mahākāśyapa and then had him preach. In another story, the Buddha exchanged his tattered robes for Mahākāśyapa's large hempen robe (*saṅghātī*). Since Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana had prede-

ceased the Buddha, Mahākāśyapa was recognized by everyone as the most influential figure in the Buddhist order after the Buddha's death. Consequently, later, when those in Ānanda's lineage traced their spiritual ancestry, they did not mention Ānanda's actual preceptor since he was almost completely unknown and did nothing to bolster Ānanda's authority. Instead, they devised a legend in which Mahākāśyapa bestowed the teaching on Ānanda.

One of the major objections to the tradition that Mahākāśyapa was Ānanda's preceptor is that many legends suggesting that serious discord existed between Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda are found in the *Āgamas* and *vinayas*. For example, according to the chapter on the First Council in the *Vinaya*, after the First Council, Mahākāśyapa described several serious errors made by Ānanda and urged Ānanda to confess them. Other stories concern criticisms that Ānanda's followers made against Mahākāśyapa when he was older. Mahākāśyapa was influential immediately after the Buddha's death, but later Ānanda's followers gained in strength until they became the stronger faction.

Ānanda had many strong connections with the orders in the west. In many episodes in the *Āgamas*, he is described as staying and preaching to people at the Ghositārāma in Kauśāmbī, in the western part of central India.<sup>6</sup> Since Ānanda liked to proselytize in the west, he probably had many disciples there. When a committee of eight monks was chosen to investigate the points at issue at the Second Council, six of the eight were Ānanda's disciples. Because Ānanda had lived longer than most of the Buddha's other immediate disciples, his disciples were among the eldest members of the order approximately one century after the Buddha's death.

The above account agrees with other information about Ānanda's age. At the time of the Buddha's death, Ānanda served as his personal attendant, a position probably not held by an elderly monk. According to the *Ta-chih-tu lun* (T 25:68a, *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*) and the commentary on the *Theragāthā*, Ānanda was the Buddha's attendant for twenty-five years. If Ānanda had become the Buddha's attendant immediately after he was ordained, then he was probably forty-five years old at the Buddha's death and might well have lived for another thirty to forty years.

Ānanda's disciple Śāṇakavāsī was a native of Rājagṛha according to Northern sources such as the *A-yü-wang ching* (T 2043, *Aśokarājasūtra*?). He introduced Buddhism to Mathurā in the west. Mount Urumuṇḍa, mentioned earlier, was in Mathurā, and Śāṇakavāsī's disciple Upagup-ta was a native of Mathurā (*A-yü-wang chuan*, T 50:114b, 117b). Thus by the time of Śāṇakavāsī, Buddhism was spreading to Mathurā.

According to Sri Lankan sources, most of the elders chosen to serve on the committee to decide the issues that arose at the time of the Second Council traced their lineages back to Upāli even while acknowledging that they were Ānanda's disciples. This discrepancy probably occurs because Mahinda, the monk who transmitted Buddhism to Sri Lanka, was in Upāli's lineage (Upāli, Dāsaka, Sonaka, Siggava, Moggaliputta, Mahinda). Mahinda's lineage was probably emphasized in Sri Lankan sources because Mahinda was one of the most important figures in Sri Lankan Buddhism. Lineages were a sacred issue for monks, and tracing a lineage back through a series of preceptors and disciples was an acknowledged way of proving the orthodoxy of a person's ordination. Consequently, monks would not have forgotten or fabricated the lineage of Mahinda and his preceptor. The fact that monks such as Sonaka and Siggava, who are included in the lineage between Upāli and Moggaliputta Tissa, do not appear as major figures in the history of the Buddhist order suggests that such lineages are probably authentic. The lineage should be understood as referring to the relationship between preceptor and disciples, not as indicating that figures such as Sonaka and Siggava were part of a lineage of monks who supervised the order.

According to Sri Lankan sources, there were five generations of *vinaya* masters between the death of the Buddha and the time of Aśoka. According to Northern sources such as the *A-yü-wang chuan* (T 2042, *Aśokarājavadāna*\*), because Ānanda's disciple Śāṇakavāsī was long-lived, Aśoka's teacher Upagupta was in the fourth generation after the Buddha. The lineage in the Northern sources from Ānanda to Śāṇakavāsī to Upagupta was based on the relationship of preceptor to disciple, reflecting the importance of ordinations, but the relationship between Mahākāśyapa and Ānanda was not one of preceptor to disciple. To explain this discrepancy, the lineage in Northern sources had to assume the format of being a transmission of the teaching rather than an ordination lineage. According to Northern sources, Aśoka's teacher was Upagupta of Mount Urumuṇḍa; in Sri Lankan sources, Aśoka's teacher was Moggaliputta Tissa of Mount Ahogaṅga. Although the two teachers resemble each other in certain ways, they cannot reasonably be identified as the same person. Questions concerning whether only one monk or both monks were Aśoka's teachers remain unanswered at present.

Evidence from the lineages thus indicates that the Sri Lankan figure of 218 years for the period between the Buddha's death and Aśoka's succession is simply too long. The figure of 116 years found in Northern sources is much more reasonable.

### Madhyāntika and the Dispatch of Missionaries

The Northern and Southern (Sri Lankan) traditions agree on a number of points concerning Madhyāntika. According to the Northern tradition, he was Ānanda's last disciple. Approximately a hundred years after the Buddha's death, he went to Kashmir, where he built a place to meditate and live. Stories about him describe how he converted some evil dragons (Nāga) in Kashmir to Buddhism, spread Buddhism among the people, and taught the people how to grow tulips to make their living.

According to the Sri Lankan tradition, missionaries from the Buddhist order were sent to various lands during the reign of Aśoka at the recommendation of Moggaliputta Tissa. Eminent monks were dispatched to nine areas, with Majjhantika going to Kashmir and Gandhāra. Majjhantika took five monks with him to Kashmir and converted evil dragons there by using his superhuman powers and the people by teaching the *Āsīvisopama-sutta*. Majjhantika is probably the same person as the Madhyāntika mentioned in the Northern sources. Since the Madhyāntika mentioned in the Northern sources was said to be the last disciple of Ānanda, he could have been a contemporary of Upagupta. And if Upagupta lived during Aśoka's reign, then the missionary activities of both men would have been assisted by Aśoka's support of Buddhism. Since Buddhism had spread to Mathurā during this time, then Madhyāntika might very well have taken it farther north to Kashmir.

According to Sri Lankan chronicles, at the same time Majjhantika was proselytizing in Kashmir, other eminent monks from the order in Magadha were spreading Buddhism to other parts of India. Each eminent monk was sent with a group of five monks, since five was the minimum number required to perform full ordinations. A list of these eminent monks, the areas in which they proselytized, and the *sūtras* that they preached follows.

Mahādeva went to Mahisamañḍala and preached the *Devadūtasutta*

Rakkhita went to Vanavāsī and preached the *Anamattagīvasutta*

Dhammarakkhita went to Aparantaka and preached the *Agghikhandu-pamasutta*

Mahādhammarakkhita went to Mahāraṭṭha and preached the *Mahā-nāradakassapa-jātaka*

Mahārakkhita went to Yonaloka and preached the *Kālakārāmasuttanta*

Majjhima went to Himavantapadesa and preached the *Dhammacakkapavattanasutta*

Sonaka and Uttara went to Suvannabhūmi and preached the *Brahmajālasutta*

Mahinda went to Laṅkāḍīpa (Sri Lanka) and preached the *Culahatthi-padopamasutta* and other *sūtras*

Mahisamañḍala, where Mahādeva was sent, seems to be to the south of the Narmadā River, but it has also been identified with Mysore. According to the *Shan-chien lü* (T 24:681c-82a), the Chinese translation of Buddhaghosa's *Samantapāsādikā*, Mahādeva and Majjhantika were teachers (*ācārya*) at Mahinda's full ordination. Episodes concerning two figures named Mahādeva are included in Sarvāstivādin sources. Mahādeva is said to be both a monk who caused the schism between the Sthavira and Mahāsaṅghika schools by preaching his "five points" and a Mahāsaṅghika monk who lived at Mount Caitika and caused the schism that led to the formation of the Caitika School (which is related to the Mahāsaṅghika School) by proclaiming the "five points." The former figure, the monk responsible for the basic schism, is probably a fictional character. The latter lived approximately two centuries after the Buddha's death at Mount Caitika, along the middle part of the Kṛṣṇā River in Āndhra. It is unclear whether this Mahādeva should be identified with the monk of the same name who was dispatched as a missionary by Moggaliputta Tissa.

The place called "Aparantaka" has been identified with a site on the west coast of India, an area previously opened to Buddhism by Pūrṇa. Mahāraṭṭha is near Bombay in Mahāraṣṭra; Yonaloka was in the north in the area where a number of Greeks lived. Himavantapadesa was in the Himalayan region, and Suvannabhūmi was in eastern India near Burma.

Besides Majjhima, four other monks—Kassapagotta, Alakadeva, Dundubhissara, and Sahadeva—helped propagate Buddhism in the Himalayan area. Among the funerary urns found at the second *stūpa* at Sāñcī were one for "Kāsapagota" [*sic*], a teacher in the Himalayan area, and another for the sage "Majjhima" [*sic*]. These archeological finds provide additional evidence concerning Majjhima's activities in Himalayan areas.

Mahinda equipped himself for his journey to Sri Lanka at the Vidiśā monastery (P. Vedisagiri) near Sāñcī, bade farewell to his mother, and departed with five monks. From Vidiśā he probably traveled to the west coast of India, boarded a ship going south, rounded the tip of the Indian subcontinent, and landed in Sri Lanka. Because the dispatch of missionaries to various parts of India is proven in part by inscriptions, the

scriptural account of the missionaries may be regarded as essentially factual.

To summarize, Ānanda opened Kauśāmbī to Buddhism. One hundred years after the Buddha's death, Buddhism had spread to Sāṅkāśya, Kanyākubja, Avanti, and along the Southern Route. Buddhism was subsequently introduced to Mathurā by Śāṇakavāsī and Upagupta. Missionaries were then dispatched to Kashmir, southern India, and the Himalayan region. Stories concerning the territory exposed to Buddhism during the lifetimes of Śāṇakavāsī and Upagupta agree with the account of the dispatch of missionaries in the next period. Thus the missionaries were probably sent out between 100 and 150 years after the Buddha's death. If the Sri Lankan version of Buddhist history is followed in which 218 years elapsed between the Buddha's death and Aśoka's succession, then there would be a hundred-year gap between Śāṇakavāsī and Moggaliputta during which the order would have been virtually moribund.

### The Third Council

As the above discussion indicates, a number of differences exist between the Northern and Southern accounts of the early Buddhist order. There are also important points of agreement between the different accounts. By the time of King Aśoka, there had been four or five generations of leaders of the *saṅgha*, and the propagation of Buddhism in Kashmir had begun. In the south, Buddhism had spread to the Deccan plateau.

According to the Sri Lankan tradition, during Aśoka's reign missionaries were sent to various parts of India. However, a project of this magnitude probably could not have involved just one school of Nikāya (Hīnayāna) Buddhism, the Theravāda. Moreover, according to the fifth chapter of the *Dīpavaṃsa*, a Sri Lankan chronicle, many schisms occurred during the second century after the Buddha's death. These schisms eventually led to the eighteen schools of Nikāya Buddhism. Thus according to the Sri Lankan account, the Caitika School of the Mahāsaṅghika lineage (founded by Mahādeva) would already have been established in Andhra by the time of Aśoka's succession to the throne. The Dharmaguptaka and the Kāśyapīya schools would have already split away from the Sarvāstivādin School, and the Kashmiri Sarvāstivādin School would already have had a strong base. In addition, according to the Sri Lankan tradition, other schools had been established by Aśoka's time, such as the Mahīśāsakas, Dharmagupta-

kas, Sammatīyas, and Vātsīputrīyas, and had probably spread beyond central India. Thus, according to Sri Lankan sources, by the time of Aśoka, Buddhism had probably already spread throughout India and most of the schisms of Nikāya Buddhism had already occurred. It is doubtful whether missionaries would have been dispatched to these areas when Buddhism was already so firmly established in them. The accounts in the Sri Lankan chronicles of the schisms and the dispatch of the missionaries by Aśoka are clearly difficult to reconcile with each other.

If both the schisms and the dispatch of missionaries are historical events, then the Northern tradition's account is more reasonable. According to this account, the missionaries were dispatched before the schisms of Nikāya Buddhism. (The Sri Lankan claim that many of the schisms occurred before Aśoka's reign is discussed in chapter 8.)

According to the Sri Lankan chronicles, bitter dissension was evident in the order during Aśoka's time. However, such discord would probably have been resolved by a series of schisms that gave monks a choice of orders. A more natural order of events would place the dissension before the schisms. The Sri Lankan chronicles describe discord in the order at Pāṭaliputra during Aśoka's reign, indicating that discord had broken out in the orders of central India. To resolve the situation, Moggaliputta Tissa was summoned from Mount Ahogaṅga. The edicts of Aśoka from Kauśāmbī, Sāñcī, and Sārnāth strongly warned against schisms in the order, stating that monks who caused schisms were to be expelled and laicized. (The fact that the edicts were carved in stone suggests that the discord probably had been occurring for a long period.) The carved edicts warning against schisms were located at the strongholds of the western monks of Avanti and the Southern Route at the time of the Second Council, and thus reflect the situation in Indian Buddhism after the dispute over the "ten points" of *vinaya* had occurred.

According to the Sri Lankan tradition, Moggaliputta Tissa was invited to Pāṭaliputra, where he defrocked heretics and purified the order so that those remaining adhered to Vibhajjavāda doctrine. Later he assembled one thousand monks and convened the Third Council. To specify orthodox doctrinal positions, he compiled the *Kathāvatthu* (Points of Controversy). These events occurred in approximately the eighteenth year of Aśoka's reign. However, if most of the schisms of Nikāya Buddhism had already occurred, as is stated in the Sri Lankan sources, it is unlikely that the various orders could have been purified and forced to conform to Vibhajjavāda doctrine. Moggaliputta Tissa probably would not have been able to stop the arguments between the monks of

Kauśāmbī, Sāñcī, and Sārnāth. Moreover, if Moggaliputta Tissa did assemble one thousand monks and convene a council, he probably would not have selected monks from other schools. Consequently, the Third Council cannot be recognized as an event involving the Buddhist orders of all of India.

Since the *Kathāvatthu* was compiled within the Theravāda order, some sort of council must have been convened. However, the council was held not during Aśoka's reign, but approximately a century after Aśoka. Since the doctrines of the various schools of Nikāya Buddhism are examined and criticized in the *Kathāvatthu*, this text must have been compiled after these schools arose, probably during the last half of the second century B.C.E. Thus if the Third Council is considered to be a historical event, it was a council held only within the Theravāda School during the latter part of the second century B.C.E.

### The Dates of the Buddha

The above discussion clearly demonstrates the difficulties of accepting the traditional Sri Lankan account of the early Buddhist order. Sri Lankan statements that the Buddha died 218 years before Aśoka's succession to the throne and that most of the schisms in the orders had occurred by Aśoka's time are difficult to reconcile with other aspects of Buddhist institutional history. Since both the Northern and Southern traditions agree that only four or five generations passed between the Buddha's death and the time of Aśoka, a figure of approximately one century for this period seems reasonable. Moreover, a survey of other primary source materials reveals that only the Sri Lankan tradition has maintained the longer period; the "218 years" figure does not appear in materials from India proper. Moreover, the absence of the figure of 218 years in India is not due to any lack of communication between Sri Lanka and India. A Sri Lankan king had the Mahābodhi-saṅghārāma built at Buddhagayā as a residence for Sri Lankan monks (*Tā-t'ang hsi-yu chi*, T 51:918b), and a Sri Lankan temple existed at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa (see chapter 14). Despite such ties, no mention of a figure of 218 years is made in Indian sources.

Sources from India proper generally state that Aśoka became king around one hundred years after the Buddha's *nirvāṇa*. Furthermore, the figure of 218 years is not the only one found in Sri Lanka. Fa-hsien was a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who traveled to India and Sri Lanka and then returned to China in 416. He spent two years at the Abhayagiri monastery in Sri Lanka. In his travel diary, Fa-hsien noted that at the



time of his arrival in Sri Lanka, monks there claimed that 1,497 years had elapsed since the Buddha's *nirvāṇa* (T 51:865a). Calculations based on this figure indicate that the Buddha's *nirvāṇa* would have occurred sometime before 1000 B.C.E., a date not even close to one based on a period of 218 years between the Buddha's death and Aśoka's succession. The figure of 218 years was thus not even accepted by all Sri Lankan monks.

A survey of other primary source materials from India reveals that in most cases Aśoka's reign is dated one hundred years or slightly more after the Buddha's *nirvāṇa*. Among the texts with a figure of one hundred years are the *Ta chuan-yen lun ching* (T 4:309c, *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā\**), *Seng-ch'ieh-lo-ch'a so-chi ching* (T 4:145a), *Hsien yü ching* (T 4:368c, *Damamūkanidānasūtra*), *Tsa pi-yü ching* (T 4:503b), *Chung-ching chuan tsa-p'i-yü* (T 4:541c), *Tsa a-han ching* (T 2:162a, *Samyuktāgama*), *Divyāvadāna* (p. 368; Vaidya ed., p. 232), *A-yü-wang chuan* (T 50:99c, *Aśokarājāvadāna\**), *A-yü-wang ching* (T 50:132a, *Aśokarājasūtra?*), *Ta-chih-tu lun* (T 25:70a, *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*), and the *Fen-pieh kung-te lun* (T 25:39a). In Hsüan-tsang's travel diary (T 51:911a), the period is one hundred years long, and in I-ching's travel diary (T 54:205c) it is only somewhat longer, thus indicating that the figure of approximately one hundred years was accepted in India at the time of their travels.

In the Tibetan translation of the *Samayabhedoparacanacakra* (Peking no. 5639), Aśoka's succession is said to have occurred one hundred years after the Buddha's *nirvāṇa*, while in Hsüan-tsang's Chinese translation (T 49:15a) the period is said to be more than one hundred years. Paramārtha's Chinese translation, the *Pu chih-i lun*, and another Chinese translation, the *Shih-pa-pu lun*, both have a figure of 116 years (T 49:18a, 20a); however, in the Yüan and Ming dynasty editions of Paramārtha's translation, the figure is changed to 160 years. According to the *Ta-fang-teng wu-hsiang ching* (T 12:1097c; *Mahāmeghasūtra*#), 120 years elapsed between the Buddha's *nirvāṇa* and Aśoka's succession. In the *Mo-ho mo-yeh ching* (T 12:1013c, *Mahāmāyāsūtra?*), the period is stated to be less than 200 years. According to Bhavya's *Sde-pa tha-dad-par byed-pa dan rnam-par bsad-pa* (*Nikāyabhedavibhaṅga-vyākhyāna*, Peking no. 5640), a Theravāda tradition dated the first major schism between the Sthaviras and Mahāsaṅghikas as occurring 160 years after the Buddha's *nirvāṇa*, during Aśoka's reign.

Some scholars have relied heavily on Bhavya's figure of 160 years after the Buddha's death for the first schism. On the basis of the figure of 160 years, which occurs in the Yüan and Ming dynasty editions of the *Pu chih-i lun*, they have argued that the figures of 116 years or "slightly more than one hundred years" found in other translations should be

amended to 160 years. However, the Sung dynasty and the Korean editions of the *Pu chih-i lun*, both older than either the Yüan or the Ming dynasty editions of the text, have figures of 116 years. Since the evidence for the figure of 160 years is comparatively late and since no other materials with a figure of 160 years have been found, the figures of 116 years or "slightly more than one hundred years" must be accepted as more trustworthy. Moreover, Bhavya presents the figure of 160 years as only one of a number of theories. Finally, the 160-year figure must still be reconciled with the Theravāda figure of 218 years. Thus, the evidence for the figure of 160 years is highly questionable.

On the basis of the development of the Buddhist order and Buddhist historical materials, then, a figure of about one hundred years has been shown to be the most reasonable figure for the period between the death of the Buddha and the succession of Aśoka to the throne. However, an investigation of the reigns of the kings of Magadha indicates that 116 years is too short, and thus many scholars favor a period of 218 years or advocate a compromise figure of 160 years. However, the three figures cannot all be adopted at the same time. For the purpose of discussing the history of the Buddhist order, since the 218-year figure presents many problems, the 116-year figure will be followed in this account.

In summary, after the death of the Buddha, the Buddhist order spread to the west and southwest. The Buddha's long-lived disciple Ānanda was influential during this period. Later, Ānanda's disciple Śāṇakavāsi was preeminent in the western order; however, Buddhism had still not spread as far as Mathurā at this time. Still later, Sarvakāmin (P. Sabbakāmin) was preeminent in the eastern order while Revata was influential in the west. At this time, the controversy over the ten points of *vinaya* arose, and the elders met in Vaiśālī to deliberate over the disputes and resolve them. Many monks did not submit to the council's decision, however, and the dispute later became a cause for the schism that resulted in the Sthavira and Mahāsaṅghika schools. Thus, approximately one hundred years after the Buddha's death, there were already frequent disputes in the Buddhist orders in the various parts of India.

During Śāṇakavāsi's later years, Buddhism spread to Mathurā. A little more than one century after the Buddha's death, Aśoka came to the throne. Śāṇakavāsi had already died, and Upagupta and Moggaliputta were the preeminent monks in the order. When Aśoka converted to Buddhism, he invited the two teachers to his capital at Pāṭaliputra. According to Northern sources, at Upagupta's urging, Aśoka traveled to Buddhist pilgrimage sites with Upagupta and erected *stūpas* at various places. Aśoka's pilgrimages are mentioned, in fact, in his inscrip-

tions. According to Sri Lankan sources, Moggaliputta put an end to the disputes among the monks in Pāṭaliputra and advocated the dispatch of missionaries to various lands. Majjhantika was sent to bring the teachings of Buddhism to Kashmir, Majjhima and Kassapagotta to the Himalayan region, and Mahādeva to southern India. Buddhism thus spread to all of India with Aśoka's conversion and assistance. During Aśoka's reign, the disputes within the order became more evident, but still not severe enough to cause a schism. Only after Aśoka's death did the actual schism of the order into the Sthavira and Mahāsaṅghika schools occur, probably in part because of the decline of the Mauryan empire. Thus serious disputes arose within the early Buddhist order's ranks before Aśoka's reign, but the order did not actually split into schools until after Aśoka's death. The spread of Buddhism to all of India meant that regional differences were added to doctrinal differences with the result that further schisms occurred rapidly during the century after Aśoka's death.